Business in N.E. region

2338. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the economic liberalization of the country and the Government's "look east" policy has created a conducive environment for business opportunities in North-East;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to improve the business through "look east policy" in North-East region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) A number of initiatives have been taken with a view to give an economic content to Government of India's "look east" policy in the recent years. These, *inter-alia* include the following:

(i) A Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and ASEAN was signed during the course of the 2nd India-ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia on 8th October, 2003. This Agreement seeks to establish a Free Trade Area (FTA) covering goods, services and investments between India and ASEAN in a time frame of 10 years. Negotiations are in progress for operationalising different parts of the Agreement.

Measure to boost trade between N.E. India and Bangladesh

2339. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bangladesh is keen to expand its trade with North-East India and they have suggested to set up joint venture projects with buyback arrangement to give a boost to the ongoing trade between North-East India and Bangladesh; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) In the last three